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Hannah and her Seven Sons





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HANNAH AND HER
SEVEN SONS



Tyranny.

HANNAH AND HER SEVEN SONS

AN INCIDENT OF THE PERSECUTION OF
THE JEWS BY THE SYRIAN MONARCH
ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES, 167 B.C.

BY

MINNIE DESSAU LOUIS



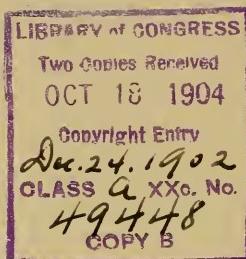
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Hannah and her Seven Sons

All is desolate and dark. To me there's
no light

Since they took from the world my
treasures so bright.

My children! My children! Beats
yet my heart

When all of its strings are thus riven
apart?

Yet for Israel's God this suff'ring I
bear,

And would bear a greater, if greater
there were.



All is desolate and dark. To me there's no light
Since they took from the world my treasures so bright.

Hannah and her Seven Sons

Oh ! how the whole scene is burned into
my brain !

I see the vile Syrians with faces like
Cain

Rush over my threshold and ruthlessly
seize

All my seven fair sons, while I on my
knees

With tears and implorings beseech them
to wait ;

—Hope whispers that time might avert
their sad fate ;

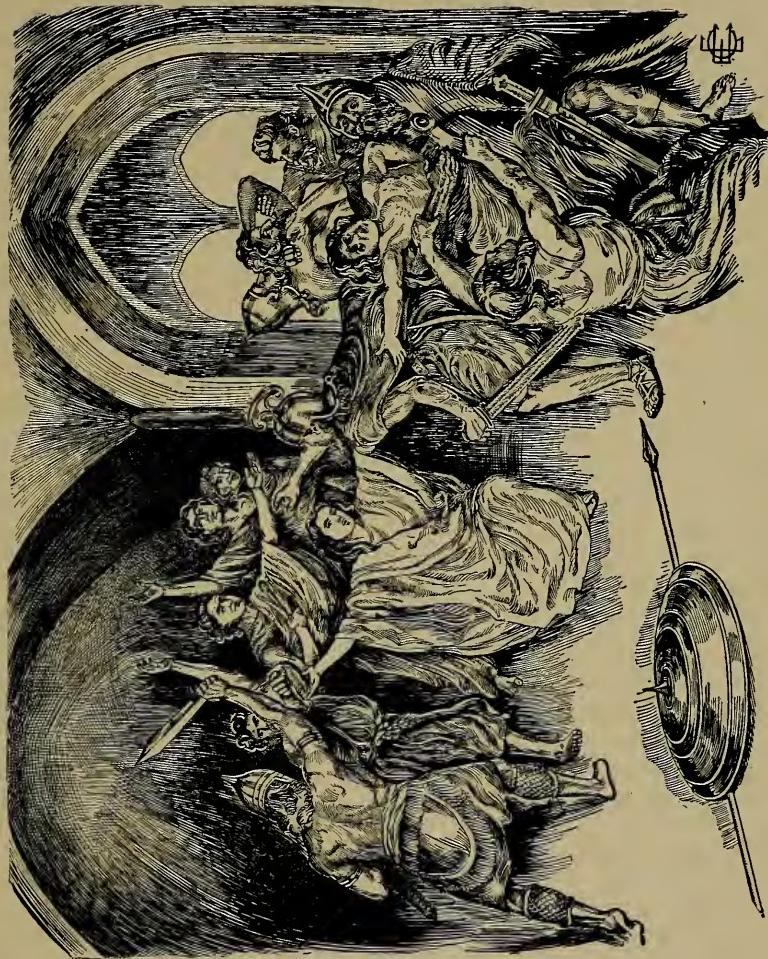
I knew 'twas but yester the old scribe
they slew,

The old Eleazar to Israel so true,—

Hannah and her Seven Sons

On my knees I implore them to wait but
a day ;
They mock at my pleading ; then drag
us away
And cast us in prison ; but leave us not
long ;
The Bigot his triumph will show to the
throng.

With wickedest pleasure he calls for the
first
Of my beautiful boys, the one that I
nursed
In the flush of my youth when Judea
was free ;



On my knees I implore them to wait but a day.

Hannah and her Seven Sons

—Oh God ! keep his heart firmly true
unto Thee.—

Ha ! The king commands homage to
him and his gods.

He looks up to Heaven, nor falter his
words :

“God forbid that homage to thee I
should show ;

Israel’s God is my God ! To none else
will I bow.”

They lead him to death, my first born !
my pride !

And now tear my second fair boy from
my side

Hannah and her Seven Sons

And place him in front of the conqueror's throne:

—Thou wilt not, my son, thy religion disown.—

His answer is ready; he quick makes reply:

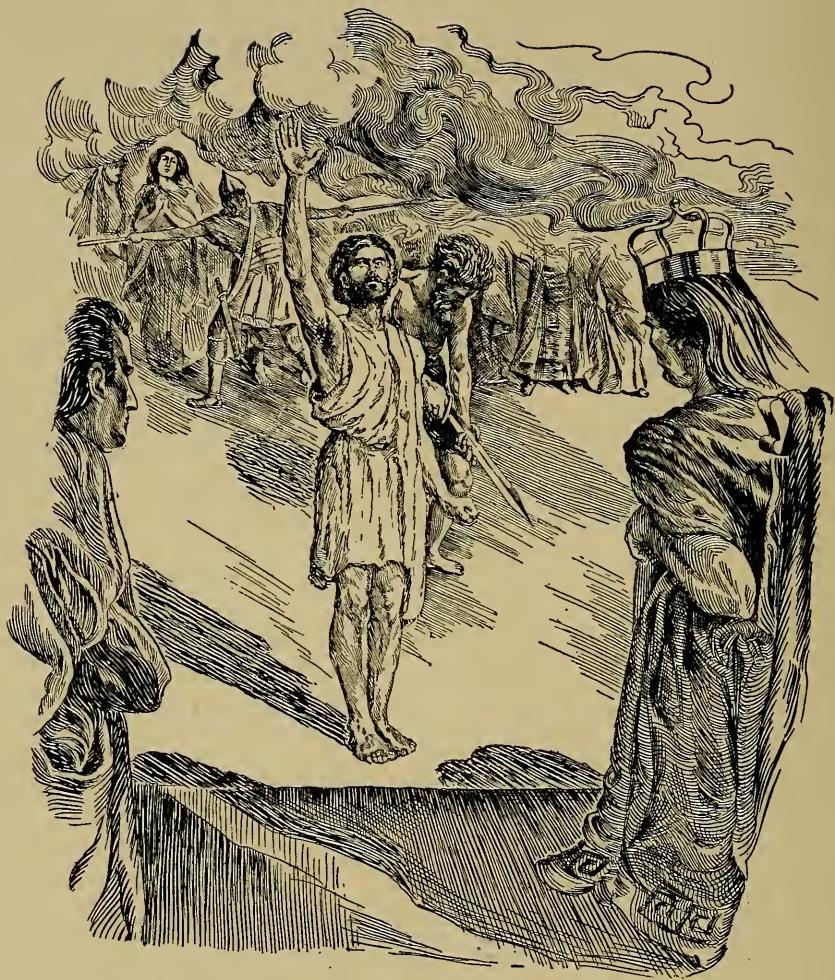
“My brother bowed not, and no more will I!”

“Why not?” asks the tyrant. “Because,” says my boy,

And his face grows resplendent with heavenly joy,

“Our second commandment tells all,— even thee,

No other gods shalt thou have before me.”



“ God forbid that homage to thee I should show ;
Israel’s God is my God ! To none else will I bow.”

Hannah and her Seven Sons

Death follows his brave words. My
third boy they take;
—Be still, my wild heart—not yet must
thou break.—

My third one! My hero! How prince-
ly his port!

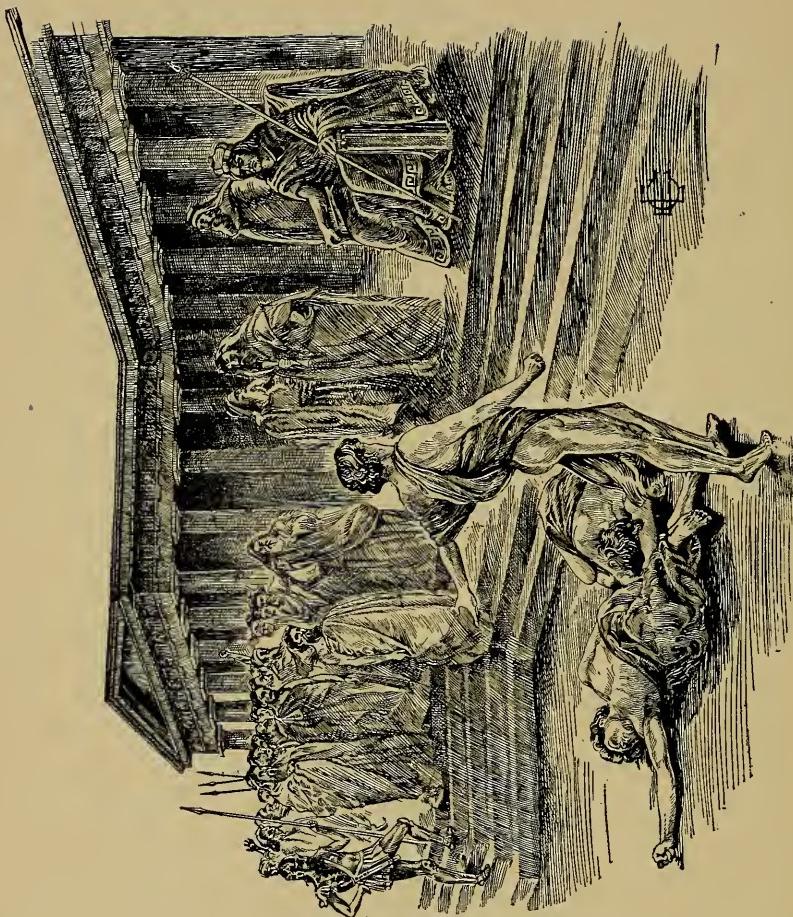
“No other God shalt thou worship! is
taught

In my pure religion; more gladly I
meet

The fate of my brothers than bow at
thy feet.”

These proud words the death-blow as
guerdon receive.

—“ More gladly I meet
The fate of my brothers than bow at thy feet.”



Hannah and her Seven Sons

My fourth boy they take; will the
tyrant achieve

Any conquest over his soft, gentle
heart?

—Fear not, my sweet son! Bear bravely thy part!—

Yes! he too is faithful! He utters
these words:

“He that sacrificeth to all other gods
Save the Lord only, shall be wholly
destroyed.”

Alas! he too is slain! how widens the
void

In my sore-stricken heart. Ha! now
my fifth lad

Hannah and her Seven Sons

They drag to the tyrant, who, already
mad,

Becomes doubly enraged at these words
of my son :

“ Hear, O Israel ! The Lord our God,
He is One ! ”

With this watch-word of faith he yields
his young life.

Now they come for my sixth. His
spirit is rife

With scorn and contempt for the des-
pot’s vain power ;

Nor scourges nor threats will cause him
to cower.

Hannah and her Seven Sons

“Why so obstinate?” asks the tyrant,
more mild.

—Waver not, my dear son, thou’rt
Judea’s true child!—

“Think’st thou I’m affrighted? My
God is still here;
He is mighty and terrible! Him only
I fear;

And thou too wilt one day acknowl-
edge His might,

And suffer that thus thou hast usurped
His right.”

They take him to death in his fresh, joy-
ous youth,



—now my fifth lad
They drag to the tyrant.

Hannah and her Seven Sons

That thus he pronounces the stern words
of truth.

What horror is this? My youngest ye'll
take?

My baby? My darling? Oh! for the
sake

Of the mother who bore you, spare me
this son!

My six have ye murdered! Will ye
leave me not one?

They heed not my pleading, but drag
him away;

Oh, Father of Heaven! Is this but one
day?



—Oh ! for the sake
Of the mother who bore you, spare me this son !

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Hannah and her Seven Sons

But see! The base murd'rer speaks
kindly to him.

—My sweet precious child, do nothing
to dim
The lustre that shines from thy six
brothers gone;
Be true to thy God e'en though thou'rt
undone.—

Now the king hands him treasure, and
tells him to live,

And promises all, if allegiance he'll give.
See! Now does he cast his ring on the
ground,

Now shows him his dead brothers lying
around



“ Think’st thou that I fear thy threats ? ” says my boy.

Hannah and her Seven Sons

And tells him their fate will be his if he
dare
Refuse to stoop for it.—Still lies the
ring there!

“ Think’st thou that I fear thy threats ? ”
says my boy ;

“ Our God is the great King of Kings !
Then why

Should I give allegiance to other than
He ? ”

“ If thy God is so great why saves He
not thee

From my power ? ” asks the king.
“ Because,” he replies,

Hannah and her Seven Sons

And in his young face a grandeur doth
rise,

“I am not worthy redemption from
thee

And thou art not worthy God’s greatness
to see.”

“Slay the lad like his brothers!” the
tyrant commands.

Oh ! Cruel king, ere thou steepest thy
hands

In the blood of my little one, let me be
slain.

I cannot endure this mountain of pain.

“Nay, thy own laws forbid,” the tyrant
doth say ;

Hannah and her Seven Sons

“ Sheep nor cow with its young shalt
thou kill in one day.”

Oh! woe to thee, murd’rer, our laws to
pervert!

The God of our race will inflict thy
desert.

Come, my sweet angel ! My lamb !

Ere we part,

Come kiss thy poor mother ! Come
nearer my heart !

—Oh courage !—My dear one, tell
Abraham there,

My sacrifice hath his much exceeded ;
where



'Tis for God's glory ; His will be done !

Hannah and her Seven Sons

He built one altar I have built seven !

He offered one Isaac ; all mine have I
given !

A little longer ! A little longer ! Fare-
well, my son !

'Tis for God's glory ; His will be done !

There ! There are my children, my
dear treasures, all !

They see me. And now they beckon
and call



Yes ! Yes ! My Beloved ! I'm coming ! I come !

Hannah and her Seven Sons

To come join them there in that beautiful place.

Yes ! Yes ! My Beloved ! quick,
quick will I trace

My steps to our house-top, and thou
canst reach there

And with thy strong arms draw me up
through the air.

We'll cheat the mad tyrant, and dwell
in our home.

Yes ! Yes ! My Beloved ! I'm
coming ! I come !





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